

July 2003

CANADA: Streams in the southern interior of British Columbia were experiencing very low flow conditions by the end of July. For some of the streams monitored by the BC River Forecast Centre, the current flow conditions were the lowest flow recorded in 50+ years of record and are unprecedented.

Rains have generally been spotty through the Canadian Prairies during much of July, as spring seeded crops used much of the remaining moisture in the ground. Crop conditions were variable but moisture stress is widespread in all three provinces. Hot temperatures were adding to the stress on crops that were looking good a few weeks prior.

In the Bas-Saint-Laurent-Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region of Quebec cereal emergence got underway slowly under drought conditions. Stems are short even though close to the heading stage and emergence is uneven. In addition, the lack of rain during the fructification period for blueberry plants could affect the crop's yield, and the fruit may not reach its optimum size.

UNITED STATES: July 2003 was warmer than average for the contiguous United States, ranking as 12th warmest and 45th driest nationally. However, the contrast between the excessive rainfall in the East and the lack of precipitation in the West belied this ranking. Idaho had the warmest July, statewide, in its 109-year record and New Mexico had the driest July. Rainfall was near normal for the Primary Corn and Soybean belt.

Tropical Storm Bill came ashore along the coast of Louisiana on June 30, and caused excessive rainfall amounts in the Southeast and the Mid-Atlantic on the following days. Hurricane Claudette came ashore in Texas on the July 15, leaving several inches of rainfall throughout the southern coastal portion of the state.

As for the changes to the drought regions during the month, several areas in the West became significantly worse, ranging from moderate to exceptional drought. A large area of “moderate drought” (D1) was added to the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho), and several “exceptional drought” (D4) areas popped up in parts of Idaho and along the northern borders of Nevada and Utah. “Moderate drought” (D1) expanded into much of the central and southern Great Plains during July.

As the month neared its end, heat and dryness were occurring across many of the western and central parts of the country. For this reason, most of the drought and dryness areas are considered to have both agricultural and hydrological impacts.

MEXICO: Drought conditions in July improved over some parts of northern Mexico, deteriorated over parts of the south, and remained generally unchanged from June over many other areas. In northern Mexico, improvement occurred over Coahuila, the northern part of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, partially due to Tropical Storm Claudette. Conditions also

improved in northern Sonora and in southern portions of the state and northern Sinaloa with the contraction of the “exceptional drought” D4 area. Above normal rainfall along the Gulf Coast resulted in improvement over parts of Tamaulipas and Vera Cruz.

Dry weather occurred in southern Mexico, where reports of below normal stream flows and dam levels were noted. “Abnormal dryness” D0 expanded into parts of Quintana Roo, and “moderate drought” D1 expanded into Tabasco and Chiapas. “Abnormal dryness” D0 was introduced into coastal sections from southern Sinaloa into Guerrero, where less than 75% of the normal July precipitation fell.